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# **The Origin of the Amida Buddha**

## **—The concept of the Amitābha/Amitāyus Buddha arose from Gilt Śākyamuni Buddha Images of Gandhara—**

*In Memory of the Late Prof. Dr. Seishi Karashima*

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### **Abstract:**

The origin of the Amida Buddha is not clarified as yet. The present author paid attention to the fact that this Buddha has two epithets, that is, Amitābha (infinite light) and Amitāyus (infinite life). These two were derived from the inherent and indivisible characteristics of gold that covered the body of gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images made in Gandhara. This conclusion is supported by the BODDO image on the Kaniska I's gold coins, that is adorned with a round smaller nimbus and an elliptical mandorla connected with another round bigger nimbus, and also by the two Gandhara relief panels that appear to represent the seated preaching Amida Buddha with a round nimbus and mandorla (aureole). This unprecedented special device of halo signifies infinite light and life of the Amida Buddha.

### **Keywords:**

Amida, Amitābha, Amitāyus, Śākyamuni, Buddha, Mahāyāna, Pure Land, Gandhara, Kaniska I, gilt

### **Introductory remarks**

In Japan, except the historical and terrestrial Śākyamuni Buddha, the most recognized Buddha (Fig. 1) is a non-historical and celestial saviour Buddha called Amida (阿弥陀) in Japanese and Āmituó (ēmituó) in Chinese. Amida is equivalent to the Chinese translation of Amitābha (無量光, wú liàng guāng) and Amitāyus (無量寿, wú liàng shòu) in Sanskrit. Amitābha means infinite and measureless light while Amitāyus signifies infinite and measureless life. Thus, the Amida Buddha has originally two names or epithets.

Considering the origin of the Amida Buddha, many hypotheses have been proposed by many scholars, mostly by Japanese Buddhologists, since the early twentieth century CE; however, all of them were criticized and rejected as false by Kotatsu Fujita and Takao Kagawa respectively.<sup>1</sup> Since I believe Fujita and Kagawa are perfectly right in their criticism and rejection, it would be unnecessary for me to dwell upon their already-condemned previous studies on the origin of the Amida Buddha, and also the Sukhāvātī (Paradise, 樂土, 極樂淨土) where he is believed to live and preach presently.

What is more important than the overview of previous studies is the fact that, at present, there is no reliable and acceptable hypothesis or theory about the origin of the Amida

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<sup>1</sup> Fujita 1070: 261–286; 2007: 238–243, 249–261; Kagawa 1993: 87–100, 155–170; cf. Nattier 2003: 193; 2006; 2007.

Buddha. Therefore, in this paper I will attempt to introduce an unprecedented but more reasonable origin of this Buddha than that presented in all the previous proposals, including the most recently published ones.<sup>2</sup> My idea of the origin of this Buddha is quite simple: the Amida Buddha originated from gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images made in Kushan Gandhara. This idea perfectly corresponds to the fact that the same Amida Buddha quite exceptionally has two different names: Amitābha and Amitāyus. The reason why this Buddha has two names or epithets is that these two concepts or appellations are intimately connected with the attributes or special characteristics of gold (Skt. *suvarṇa*, Pali. *suvanṇa*). This paper elucidates the origin of the Amida Buddha in the simplest way as possible.

However, before starting my investigation, I must declare, first, that my study is based mainly on the two oldest Mahāyāna texts in Chinese: 仏説阿弥陀三耶三仏薩樓仏檀過度人道經 (*Āmituó sānyesānfó sàlǒu{fó}tán guòdù réndào jīng* = 大阿弥陀經, *Dà āmituó jīng*, T. 12. no. 362) and 無量清淨平等覺經 (*Wúliang qīngèng Píngděngjué jīng*, T. 12. no. 361). These Chinese texts were translated from the original *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* written in the middle Indic Gāndhārī, from the second half of the second to the first half of the third century CE. I tried to avoid, as much as possible, relying on the two extant Sanskrit texts of the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtras* because these extant versions date back to the sixth century CE at the earliest. Moreover, I believe that relying on the later sūtras such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (妙法蓮華經) and the *Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra* (觀仏三昧海經), the *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra* (仏説觀無量寿仏經), the *Avataṃsakasūtra* (華嚴經) might lead me beside the mark.<sup>3</sup>

Second, even though I rely on the aforementioned two Chinese texts, I am convinced that all the Buddhist texts in Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, either extant or lost, do not contain any written evidence in relation to the origin of the Amida Buddha, including the aforementioned two Chinese translations. It is because the origin of the Amida Buddha is nothing but a ‘figment of speculation’ of a monk or monks of Gandhara, being inspired by gilt Buddha images of Gandhara. Eventually, we should understand that the so-called ‘figment of speculation’ was not a product of pure imagination (空想) but logical reasoning (推理) based on concrete evidences that I will show in the following (pp. 215–218). As everyone admits, the Amida Buddha did not exist, does not exist, and will not exist in this and other worlds or buddha fields. He is nothing but an imaginary and fictitious Buddha like a mirage unlike the historical Śākyamuni Buddha who once lived in this world. Therefore, in Kushan Gandhara, monks who created the concept of this artificial Buddha could not or did not dare to reveal the true origin or ‘historical reality’ of this purely fictitious Buddha for the benefit of their doctrine (saviour) and affiliation, because they knew well that no Buddhist doubted the words and teachings of the Śākyamuni Buddha. ‘*Evaṃ me sutaṃ* (thus have I heard, 如是我聞)’ was a sufficient incantation to make people, Buddhists at least, believe in Buddhist discourses and sūtras. Therefore, Gandharan monks were free to invent a story or figment making the best use of the absolute authority of the Śākyamuni Buddha.

This surmise can be corroborated by the fact that the aforementioned oldest Chinese

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<sup>2</sup> Matsuoaka 2013: 95–111. In addition, a few recent studies on the image of Avalokiteśvara, one of the Amida Triad, have been published, but unfortunately they rarely took into consideration the origin of the Amida Buddha, Boucher 2008, 2014; Fussman 2012; Sakuma 2015: 28–32. Daniel Boucher’s articles were kindly informed to me by anonymous reviewer(s) of my article.

<sup>3</sup> Iwamoto 1978: 42–45; Karashima 2018: 192; Gomez 1996: 1–111.

translations attribute and ascribe the relevant original Gāndhārī sūtras to the Śākyamuni Buddha, not to the Amida Buddha himself, in order to have the Śākyamuni Buddha authorize the existence and actuality of the fictitious Amida Buddha and his buddha-field.<sup>4</sup> For the adherents of the Amida Buddha it might have been meaningless and useless to reveal the historical but horrible truth that the Amida Buddha was fictitious, born from the speculations of a certain monk or several monks. If they had told the true origin or ‘historical facticity’, they would have been condemned and ousted not only from their group but also all the Buddhist monasteries. So, the monks adhering to the Amida Buddha could not help remaining silent about the origin of this Buddha and deceiving all the Buddhists including followers of the Amida Buddha. Consequently, they did not write any thesis nor comment on the origin of the Amida Buddha. Therefore, in my opinion, we cannot expect a direct and concrete evidence, that is, a written evidence that can disclose the true origin of the Amida Buddha. All the so-called evidences available are indirect and non-literary materials such as figurative images of buddha, bodhisattva made of stone or depicted on paintings, relief panels and coins that never tell us in words the reason why the Amida Buddha was born. This fact is the main reason why our predecessors could not solve the difficult problem, because they continued in vain to procure ‘non-existing’ written evidence only in Buddhist sūtras and literature. It is completely useless to attempt to find a written evidence pertaining to the origin of the Amida Buddha because such an evidence never existed at all. In other words, the origin of the Amida Buddha is nothing but ‘a lie that turned truth’ or ‘out of which the truth came out’ as a Japanese proverb says (嘘から出た真). This truth was kept once in the memory of Gandharan monks but has been completely buried in oblivion after they passed away.

Eventually, all the studies of the origin of the Amida Buddha, needless to say, including mine, cannot but be a hypothetical product of logical reasoning based on those reticent materials available to us. That result may appear to be just a ‘figment of imagination’ and ‘there appears to be absolutely no evidence for this anywhere’ in this paper. However, my attempt is not a ‘figment of imagination’<sup>5</sup> but a hypothesis of logical reasoning based on concrete indirect or secondary evidences, because this is the only possible method of investigation in case there is no direct written evidence.

Anyone who wants to criticize my way of reasoning and its result, and to assert that I ‘do not offer any concrete evidence’, must prove, first of all, that there was a written evidence pertaining to the ‘lie’ that I mentioned above or the so-called origin of the Amida Buddha. If someone can demonstrate it with some written concrete evidences, I am ready to withdraw my most reasonable and plausible hypothesis ever written about the origin of the Amida Buddha.

### 1 Origin of Amitābha and Amitāyus

It is well known that the Amida Buddha has exceptionally two names or epithets in Sanskrit: Amitābha and Amitāyus. No other Buddha is endowed with two names or epithets. Among the two hypotheses relating to them, one regards Amitābha as prior to Amitāyus while the

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<sup>4</sup> Both sūtras were delivered by the Śākyamuni Buddha (佛説) when he stayed on the Gṛdhra-kūṭa mountain in Rājagṛha and spoke for the Amida Buddha.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous reviewer’s comment. However, I am very grateful to the reviewer(s) because I could revise the draft and make additions and modifications satisfactorily.

other argues that Amitāyus appeared before Amitābha.<sup>6</sup> The lamented Seishi Karashima asserted that Amitābha is prior to Amitāyus on the basis of phonetic transformation in Gāndhārī from Amitābha to Amitāyus (Amitābha = Amidāha → Amidāhu → Amidā'u → Amidāyu = Amitāyus).<sup>7</sup> I am uncertain about the accuracy of his phonological reconstruction; however, I am convinced in accordance with my reverent deceased colleague that Amitābha is prior to Amitāyus, not vice versa. Anyhow, the time lag between Amitābha and Amitāyus appears to be very short, and these two names and epithets emerged almost contemporaneously in Gandhara as Fujita and Masahiro Shimoda suggested.<sup>8</sup>

According to the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (extant version compiled in the twelfth to seventeenth centuries CE) and its Chinese translation (tr. in 402 CE, 佛說阿彌陀經, T. 12. no. 366. 347a), the Śākyamuni Buddha explains these two epithets as follows:

What do you think, O Śāriputra? Why that Tathāgata is called Amitāyus? Now, O Śāriputra, it is really because that Tathāgata and the people living in his realm are endowed with infinite and endless life. That is the reason why that Tathāgata is called Amitāyus. And ten *kalpas* have passed, O Śāriputra, since this Tathāgata attained to unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. Then, why that Tathāgata is called Amitābha? It is undoubtedly because that Tathāgata emits infinite and endless light that cannot be interrupted by all the Buddha worlds. That is the reason why that Tathāgata is called Amitābha (Skt. *tat kiṃ manyase Śāriputra kena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitāyur nāmocyate / tasya khalu punaḥ Śāriputra tathāgatasya teṣāṃ ca namuṣyāṇāṃ aparimitam āyuspramānam / tena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitayur nāmocyate / tasya ca Śāriputra tathāgatasya daśa kalpā anuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim abhisambuddhasya // tat kiṃ manyase Śāriputra kena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitābho nāmocyate / tasya khalu punaḥ Śāriputra tathāgatasyābhāpratihatā sarva-buddhakṣetreṣu / tena kāraṇena sa tathāgato 'mitābho nāmocyate*) (舍利弗。於汝意云何。彼佛何故号阿弥陀。舍利弗。彼佛光明無量。照十方国無所障礙。是故号为阿弥陀。又舍利弗。彼佛寿命。及其人民無量無边阿僧祇劫。故名阿弥陀) (T. 12. no. 366. 347a)<sup>9</sup>

The mystery of the origin of the Amida Buddha lies hidden in these two epithets, which appear to be intrinsic and essential characteristics of this Buddha. They are seemingly indivisible from one another. What kind of object owns both infinite and endless light and life as an innate essence? One of them is the Sun. The other is gold, which was identified by ancient people as the Sun. In my opinion, the Sun should be excluded from the candidate or option. Jean Przylski already clarified that the Sun or Iranian Mithra was transmitted as Mithra or Mitra (and Ajita/Maitreya ?) in India.<sup>10</sup> Etienne Lamotte was apparently mistaken in asserting that “Amitbha n'est que la réplique bouddhiste et hindoue d'un dieu solaire iranien.”<sup>11</sup> The Kushan Sun god (Fig. 2) decorated with a radiate nimbus, is inscribed as *Miirō*, *Miorō*, or *Mirro* on Kushan coins issued in Gandhara.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Mithra and Amitābha/Amitāyus have no phonetic relation. Consequently, only gold could have infinite

<sup>6</sup> Kagawa 1993: 98–108.

<sup>7</sup> Following Brough's proposal, Brough 1982(1996): 68(472); Karashima 1999: 141, note 34; 2009: 121–122; 2014: 466; Nattier 2006: 190, note 25, 197.

<sup>8</sup> Fujita 1970: 320–321; Shimoda 2013: 13–14.

<sup>9</sup> Gomez 1996:18; Fujita 2001: 247, 82; 2011: 88; Karashima 2009: 122; 2014: 465–468; Williams 2009:240.

<sup>10</sup> Przylski 1930: 3–9.

<sup>11</sup> Lamotte 1958: 551.

<sup>12</sup> Jongeward/Cribb/Donovan 2015: 269–272; Shenkar 2014: 102–114, 279–288, figs. 65-80; Farridnejad 2018: 370–372, figs. 74-76.

and measureless light and life.

I believe both epithets, Amitābha and Amitāyus, stemmed from the intrinsic qualities of gold. Gold does not only emit infinite light but also has endless and immortal life as it never rusts unlike metals such as silver and bronze. In fact, as everyone admits, both the concepts of Amitābha and Amitāyus are indivisible and inseparable from one another like the obverse and reverse of a coin. This was the primary reason for applying these two epithets to the same one Buddha almost at the same time. How were these twin epithets and notions connected with one Buddha? It could be done only by the gold of gilt Buddha Śākyamuni images of Gandhara, which were covered with gold leaves or gold paints from head to feet.

In this regard, it is quite interesting that Fujita proposed that both epithets were derived from the two innate and inherent characteristics of the Śākyamuni Buddha : brightness and long life.<sup>13</sup> In the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, Vol. I, I.3.6 and II.1.4, he is described as a shining and heated man: *sambuddho tapataṃ seṭṭho esā ābhā anuttarā* (The Buddha is the highest among the heated and shining beings. He is the best light).<sup>14</sup> He was also known as man of longevity and could prolong his life as long as he wished: *Tathāgato kappa vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvasesam vā* (The Buddha could, therefore, should he desire it, live on yet for an aeon, or for that portion of the aeon which has yet to come).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, there existed already in the Hīnayāna (Mainstream) Buddhism the thoughts that the Buddha can emit light and live an exceptionally long life as Fujita remarks. However, it must be kept in mind that the two characteristics of the Śākyamuni Buddha are not identical to Amitābha and Amitāyus.

Therefore, Fujita is partly right in relating those two epithets (Amitābha and Amitāyus) to the conceptualizations of the Buddhahood of Śākyamuni, but wrong in connecting them directly to the Buddhahood of Śākyamuni. The two epithets were not derived from the Buddhahood of the Śākyamuni Buddha himself, because this Buddha is not endowed with these two epithets in Hīnayāna sūtras.

Be that as it may, these thoughts or concepts were undoubtedly inherited by Hīnayāna monks and held by them in the second century CE when the anthropomorphic effigy or statue of the Śākyamuni Buddha was created in Kushan period. Therefore, the origin of the Amida Buddha must be investigated in the context of transition from Hīnayānanist conceptualizations of the Buddha to Mahāyānanist ones as Fujita asserts.<sup>16</sup> As Satoshi Hiraoka explained more clearly, some monks in Gandhara or Mathura attempted to reconsider and reinterpret the Hīnayānist traditional concepts of the Buddhahood and regenerated the Śākyamuni Buddha as a new savior Buddha.<sup>17</sup> In that regeneration process or Mahāyāna (Mainstream) movement it seems more than likely that it is only the gilt images of the Śākyamuni Buddha that could play a decisive and crucial role, and give rise to the Amida Buddha. This

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<sup>13</sup> Fujita 1994: 158–159, 2007: 251–254.

<sup>14</sup> *The Samyutta-Nikāya*, ed. by L. Feer, 1884 (2006): 15, 47; *The Sutta-Nipāta*, 508, Andersen/Smith 1965: 91, *jutimā*=brilliant, bright; Fujita 1970: 269, 330–335; 2007: 253–255. As his epithets in Pali such as *pabhaṃkara*=emitting light, *jutindhara*=having brilliance, *jutimat*=shining, *patāvanta*=shining, Fujita 1985: 416–419; Cone 2013: 242; Matsuoka 2013: 17, 37.

<sup>15</sup> The Pali *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*, 3.3 says that the Tathāgata can live for one *kappa* or longer than one *kappa* (一劫有余). The *kappa* or *kalpa* in Pali and Sanskrit means a century, four thousand or twenty millions of years. Rhys Davids/Carpenter 1903 (1982): 103; Rhys Davids 1910 (2001): 111; Fujita 2007: 251–252, 254: notes 5, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Fujita 2001: 119, the origin of the Amida Buddha should be sought in the development of the Buddhahood, 2007: 254, 259, 261, 272.

<sup>17</sup> Hiraoka 2015: 152–158; 2018: 25–27.

assumption might be easily accepted if we recognize that the ancient Gandharan Buddhist monasteries housed many gilt images of buddha, bodhisattva and relief panels that I refer to in the next chapter.

If this was the case, it would be quite natural that the two concepts or notions of Amitābha and Amitāyus evolved almost simultaneously in the thoughts of Gandharan Buddhist monks who could always look at gilt images of the Śākyamuni Buddha arranged around stupas.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, these notions of gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images inspired them with the idea of a new savior Buddha, that is, the anthropomorphic incarnation of both infinite light and measureless life, almost at the same time, although the concept of amitābha was probably recognized a little earlier than the concept of the latter as Karashima remarked. It is because the infinite light can be perceived quite easily and directly by the naked eye while the measureless life cannot be instantly recognized only by the eyes, but can be acquired, a little later, through meditative or philosophical thinking. In addition, Fujita quite interestingly remarked that, originally, two Mahāyānist groups existed, one of which was led by faith in Amitābha while the other in Amitāyus.<sup>19</sup> These two groups correspond exactly to the two kinds of Mahāyāna sūtras — one gives priority to Amitābha while the other to Amitāyus. However, we must not forget that these two types of thoughts emerged only after the notions of amitābha and amitāyus were recognized and born from the gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images of Gandhara.

Then, it is beyond a reasonable doubt that the two indivisible characteristics of amitābha and amitāyus, intimately pertaining to gold, led to the creation of a new saviour Buddha, Amitābha or Amitāyus in Gandhara.

## **2 Gilt Śākyamuni Buddha Images of Gandhara**

Probably, the Buddhist monks of Gandhara, living in Buddhist temples, recognized for the first time these two characteristics inherent in gold covering the body of Śākyamuni Buddha images, leading to the creation of a new savior Buddha. Such their deed might be said to be a very productive intuition and marvelous idea. This assumption can be corroborated by what was recorded by Chinese monks who visited Gandhara.

According to a Chinese pilgrim Fa xian (法顯), ‘to the south of Hadda city in the country of Nagarahara, there is a stone-made room with the plastered wall, which, depicts, a golden image shining in the true shape of the Buddha’ (觀之如佛真形。金色相好。光明炳著) (T. 51. no. 2085. 859a). This report indicates that a standing or sitting Buddha was painted on a wall, which might have been gilt with gold paint or gold dust many years before Fa xian visited this place in around 400 CE. In my opinion, most of gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images that had been made in the Kushan period already lost gold leaves when Fa xian came to the Greater Gandhara. On reading his travel report, I feel that Fa xian paid little attention to other gilt Buddha images of Śākyamuni made of schist as he was not an art historian. Thus, there could be more images of gilt Śākyamuni Buddha and Buddha (Bodhisattva) Maitreya in Gandhara than he mentioned in his travel record.

According to another Chinese pilgrim Song yun (宋雲), ‘to the north of the capital

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<sup>18</sup> Although monks of Gandhara knew well that the round nimbus attached to the head of gilt Buddha images is related to infinite light but misunderstood that it emits radiance. It is not a device to emit rays, see *infra*, pp. 215–216.

<sup>19</sup> Fujita 1970: 320–321.

Mangala (modern Mingora) of Uddiyana (Swat), there is a Buddhist temple called Dara (陀羅寺) and in this temple 6000 (or 60) gilt (Buddha) images are arranged around a high and big stupa' (城北有陀羅寺。佛事最多。浮圖高大。僧房遍側周圍。金像六千軀) (T. 51. no. 2092. 1020b).

Furthermore, Song yun states, 'in the Buddhist temple called White Elephant (白象宮) to the north of Polusha (modern Shāhbāz-garhī), (Śākyamuni) Buddha images are made of stone, beautifully adorned, and stone images are numerous. They are gilt from the top to the bottom, dazzlingly glittering' (城北一里有白象宮。寺內佛事皆此石像。莊嚴極麗。頭數甚多。通身金箔。眩耀人目) (T. 51. no. 2092. 1021a). Regarding the same Buddhist temple, a Chinese pilgrim Hui sheng (惠生), who accompanied Song yun, reports that stone images (of the Śākyamuni Buddha) were decorated with gold leaves from the head to feet (石像莊嚴。通身金箔) (T. 51. no. 2086. 867a-b).

According to me, when Song yun and Hui sheng visited the Greater Gandhara, the Buddhist art of Gandhara had already declined, and most of the gold leaves once attached to many Buddha and Bodhisattva images had shed down. The aforementioned reports by three Chinese pilgrims should be regarded as attesting to exceptional remnants of gold leaves.

Although these Chinese records referred to gilt Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva images from the fourth to sixth centuries CE, such gilt Buddha and Bodhisattva images date back to the Kushan period from the second to the third centuries CE.

Considering Gandharan Buddha images from the Kushan period, a Buddha image that seems to be gilt from head to feet is, in my opinion, was represented on the reverse (Fig. 3) of the gold dinar issued by the Kushan king Kaniška I (127/28–150/51CE). The head of this Buddha (BODDO) image is surrounded by a double-circled nimbus. The outer circle or disc is larger than the inner one. Therefore, in this paper, I refer the outer circle or disk as the larger nimbus and the inner as the smaller nimbus. The inner smaller nimbus is the same as that of a standing image of the SAKAMANO BOYDO (Śākyamuni Buddha 釈迦牟尼仏) (Fig. 4) and that of the seated METRAGO BOYDO (Maitreya Buddha 弥勒仏) (Fig. 5) struck on the bronze coins of Kaniška I. These two Buddha images do not have a larger nimbus. Therefore, the larger nimbus is extraordinary in Kushan coinage because the smaller nimbus is always employed for Zoroastrian gods and goddesses depicted on Kushan coins. Moreover, the larger nimbus is connected with an elliptical mandorla (aureole) in the BODDO image. The combination of a larger nimbus and an elliptical mandorla is unprecedented and appears to play a vital role in the imagery of the Buddha. The same holds true of the Kushan king Huviška (151–190 CE) (Fig. 6), surrounded by the same kind of halo.

This new visual device of the BODDO image might feature infinite expanse and diffusion of light of the Buddha emanating from the smaller nimbus, as is testified by the two Chinese texts quoted below (infra p. 216). The elliptical mandorla and the larger nimbus undoubtedly symbolise infinite light and radiance that apparently distinguish the BODDO image (Fig. 3) from those of the Śākyamuni and Maitreya Buddhas (Figs. 4, 5). In my interpretation, the smaller nimbus was employed, first of all, in order to distinguish deity from a human being in Kushan Gandhara.<sup>20</sup> It is nothing but an emblem of a deity. This is verified by the fact that Zoroastrian gods and goddesses who are, as a rule, represented nimbate are sometimes depicted without a nimbus because their identity as deity could be easily recognized by an

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<sup>20</sup> This holds true of Parthian art of Dura-Europos, see Fowlkes-Childs/Seymour 2019:192–195, pls. 136, 137.



attribute and inscribed name.<sup>21</sup> For example, burning fire is identified as a man holding tongs as ATHSHO, Kushan fire god (Fig. 7). A smaller nimbus was created from a radiate nimbus (Fig. 2) of the Sun god, Mithra (*Miuro*), deprived of serrate projections or solar rays. Therefore, the smaller nimbus usually attached to Buddha and Bodhisattva heads in Kushan coinage and Gandharan sculpture signifies nothing but brilliance and brightness of the deity. In other words, the smaller nimbus suggests that the nimbate gods and goddesses are provided a share in the luminous world where they have their being.<sup>22</sup> For example, the Zoroastrian supreme god, Ahura Mazda is represented with a smaller nimbus on the reverse (Fig. 8) of a gold coin issued by Huviška.<sup>23</sup> This smaller nimbus of Ahura Mazda (*Ōromozdo*) signifies that he has a share in the world of infinite light, but he himself does not emit such a light. Therefore, an elliptical mandorla connected to a larger nimbus was invented in order to symbolise the emitting of enormous light (*amitābha*). Thus, the larger nimbus and elliptical mandorla of the BODDO signify radiant emission of enormous amount of infinite light while the smaller nimbus of the Śākyamuni and Maitreya Buddha symbolises only their share in the luminous world, that is, divinity. It must be remembered that a smaller nimbus does not emit any light but is simply luminous.

This interpretation can be corroborated by the descriptions of the infinite light emitted by the Amida Buddha found in the two extant earliest Mahāyānasūtras in Chinese, translated from the *Larger Sukhāvativyūhasūtras* (仏説阿弥陀三耶三仏薩樓仏檀過度人道經 = 大阿弥陀經 and 無量清淨平等覺經). Both were translated into Chinese from the second half of the second century CE to the first half of the third century CE. The former sūtra runs as follows:

The light of the Amida Buddha is most noble, unrivalled, and peerless. All other Buddhas have no equal in reach of light. The rays of light emitted from the top of the Amida Buddha's head flash over full ten million Buddha fields (阿弥陀佛。光明最尊第一無比。諸佛光明。皆所不及也。阿弥陀佛頂中光明所焰照。千萬佛国) (T. 12. no. 362. 302b, c)<sup>24</sup>

The latter sūtra presents almost the same idea; however, it differs in the notion that the rays of light are emitted from the nape of the neck of the infinite pure (Amida) Buddha (無量清淨佛項中光明) (T. 12. no. 361. 282b).

The most important of the aforementioned descriptions is the place or origin of emission and radiation of light, which is either the top of the head or the neck. I believe that the more proper place is the top (頂) of the head than the neck (nape, 項) because the neck (項) is likely the misspelling of the top (頂) of the head. Nevertheless, both these places are included in a smaller nimbus attached to the back of the heads (Fig. 9) of Gandharan Buddha images. Consequently, there remains little doubt that the aforementioned passages were written by the monks who witnessed a smaller nimbus attached to the head and neck of Gandharan Buddha images. In addition, a huge amount of light emitting and radiating from the top of the head of the Amida Buddha can be identified as the larger nimbus and the elliptical mandorla

<sup>21</sup> Göbl 1984: pls.166-171; Jongeward/Cribb/Donovan 2015: 276, 277, 279, 281, 284, 285, 290, 291–293.

<sup>22</sup> The luminous world means the endless light. Bailey 1971: 8–9; Haussig 1986: 268–269. The endless light (*asar rōšnīh* in Middle Persian, *anagra raočah* in Avestan) corresponds to *amitābha* in Sanskrit.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenfield 1967: 83, fig.9; Göbl 1984: pls. 18-no.240, 172-no. 240/2; Shenkar 2014:62, figs. 14, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Karashima 2000: 95–97; Nattier 2006: 387.

wrapping up the head and body of the BODDO (Fig. 3) on Kaniška I's gold coins. These facts can corroborate my assertion that the idea of the Amida Buddha originated from or was modelled after the nimbate gilt images of the Śākyamuni Buddha.

On the contrary, the Śākyamuni Buddha is never endowed with such an infinite light as the Amida Buddha (flashing over ten million Buddha worlds, T. 12. no. 362. 302c) as in the earliest Mahāyāna literature.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the Śākyamuni Buddha and the Maitreya Buddha were never struck on the gold coins issued by Kaniška I. This fact is quite strange because Zoroastrian gods were, as a rule, struck both on bronze and gold coins issued by this king. Does it mean that these two historical or Hīnayāna Buddhas (釈迦牟尼 and 弥勒) were not intentionally struck on the gold issues of Kaniška I? Or, does it mean that these two historical Buddhas were represented by the BODDO on gold coins? If that was the case, the BODDO image would stand for the Buddhahood or *dharmakāya* (法身仏) of unspecified generic Buddha. However, I disagree because such a notion (*dharmakāya*) cannot be visualized by an elliptical mandorla that was specially employed in order to visualize such an infinite light and radiation as the Sun emits. What is more, the nimbus of the Śākyamuni Buddha (SAKAMANO BOYDO) does not emit light, but is an emblem of deity.

Therefore, the luminous BODDO is not the historical Śākyamuni Buddha but rather one of the non-historical and imaginary Buddhas of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Among numerous Mahāyāna Buddhas, the BODDO is most likely the Amida Buddha (Amitābha and Amitāyus) because the name (Amitābha) is attested by the Brāhmī inscription unearthed from Mathura (Govindnagar) dated to 153 CE (Kaniška Era 26).<sup>26</sup> This inscription appears to be one of extant epigraphic evidences regarding the existence of a Mahāyāna Buddha, that is, the Amitābha Buddha in the Kushan period.

If that was the case, it is quite queer that only BODDO is inscribed on the reverse of the gold coins of Kaniška I when there is enough space on the reverse to inscribe AMITABO (Amitābha) or AMITAYO (Amitāyus) in Bactrian language. Therefore, the omission of Amitābha/Amitāyus was apparently done intentionally. I suppose that the reason why only BODDO was inscribed without Amitābha/Amitāyus is that there were probably two opposing groups, one of which adhered to calling Amitābha while the other preferred Amitāyus as Fujita already proposed (*supra*, p. 214).<sup>27</sup>

In case there were two opposing groups among the adherents of the Amida Buddha, I believe, the relevant die-designer(s) of the relevant Kaniška I's gold coins could not adopt either of them. However, they could not help omitting both appellations in order to avoid making trouble with the Mahāyānist followers of the Amida Buddha. After a point of compromise between the two Mahāyānist groups, the die-designer(s) inscribed only the generic name BODDO on the reverse of the relevant gold coins. In that case, the BODDO meant, needless to say, the Amida Buddha.

Lastly, I must refer to extant gilt Buddha images from Gandhara before closing this section. Unfortunately, archaeological evidence of gilt Buddha images from Gandhara is very scarce because fragile gold leaves and gilding did not survive a long time, but it is beyond doubt that there once existed a lot of gilt Śākyamuni Buddha images at Gandharan Buddhist

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<sup>25</sup> Nattier 2008; Miyaji 2018: 427–428, all the Mahāyāna sūtras mentioning emitting of light by the Śākyamuni Buddha are later than T. 12. nos. 361 and 362. His light flashes over only six million buddha worlds.

<sup>26</sup> Schopen 2005: 249, 264, figs. 1-2. Also 1987: 101, 106, figs. 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> Fujita 1970: 320–321; 2007: 280, 287.

temples, as is demonstrated by the following several extant, illustrative examples.

A stele of the Buddha Śākyamuni making Twin Miracle at Śrāvastī (Fig. 10) excavated from Pāitāva in Afghanistan is said to have been painted red on the garment for pasting gold leaves, and it still retains several tiny fragments of gold all over this relief panel.<sup>28</sup> Two Śākyamuni Buddha images (Figs. 11, 12) allegedly unearthed from Kapishi region in Afghanistan, were gilt by gold leaves as is the case with a standing Śākyamuni Buddha image (Fig. 13) unearthed from Jauliān monastery in Taxila region.<sup>29</sup> In addition to these, many relief panels, the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva images of Gandhara were undoubtedly once gilt, as illustrated in figures ten to thirteen.

### 3 Two Earliest Amida Buddha Images

The periods of Kaniška I and Huviška were the beginning of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gandhara<sup>30</sup> according to Mahāyāna Gandharī manuscript<sup>31</sup> from Bajaur, Bamiyan and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (道行般若經)<sup>32</sup> translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema. Mahāyāna Buddhism and a Hīnayāna sect, that is, the Mahāsaṃghikas admitted that countless non-historical and celestial Buddhas, presently living and teaching in other buddha-fields (現在他方世界仏) including Amitābha/Amitāyus and Akṣobhya, existed and would exist in one billion worlds, that is, the Trisāhasra-mahāsāhasro lokadhātuḥ (三千大千世界) or in countless galaxies of the Universe.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the BODDO images (Fig. 3) appear to represent one of them, most probably the Amida Buddha, who is believed to now live in the Western Paradise preaching the Buddhist Law (阿弥陀今現在說法). The existence of the cult of this Buddha of the Present is attested on a Brāhmī inscription from Govindnagar in Mathura as I outlined above.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the cult of this Buddha of the Present, undoubtedly, existed in Kushan Gandhara.

As this paper aims at solving not the origin of the figurative cultic images of the Amida Buddha in Kushan period but the concept or idea of this Buddha, therefore, I do not necessarily investigate the origin of the figurative image of the Amida Buddha.<sup>35</sup> However, since it seems more than likely that cultic images of this Buddha were made in Kushan Gandhara, I would better show a few examples.

In my view, Gandharan Amitābha/Amitāyus Buddha is depicted, at least on two relief panels: one (Fig. 14) is now exhibited in the Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo and the other (Fig. 15) in the State Art Museum of Florida. The central preaching Buddhas on both relief panels are exceptionally adorned with two types of haloes: a smaller nimbus and a bigger

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<sup>28</sup> Hackin 1925/6: 39.

<sup>29</sup> Bahadar Khan 1994: 170-172, pls. 97, 98; Hansen et al. 2009: 21, 419, Kat.no. 359; As for gilt clay heads of the Buddha, Mes Aynak and Kara-tepe, Massoudi 2011: 50; Abdullaev 2015: 122, fig.92; Lo Muzio 2017: pl.7.3; Pidaev 2019: 50-511.

<sup>30</sup> Salomon 2002: 255–256, 259–261; Schopen 2005: 261; Lam 2013: 440–441.

<sup>31</sup> The Sanskrit cliché *mahāyāna samprasthita*=set out in the Mahāyāna, Allon/Salomon 2010: 3–5; Salomon 2018: 45, 88–90, 93–94, 362–363.

<sup>32</sup> T. 8. no. 224. 427c; Harrison 1987: 74, 77; Karashima 2011: 23.

<sup>33</sup> Fujita 2007: 267–269; 2001: 101, 112; Nattier 2003: 184–185, 193.

<sup>34</sup> Schopen 2005: 249, 264, figs.1-2. Also 1987: 101, 106, figs. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> I excluded the so-called transformed Amida (化仏) seated in meditation on the headdress of the so-called Avalokiteśvara image, de Mallmann 1948: pls. I, XXI; Ingholt 1957: 117, fig. 242; Fussman 1987: 76–77, fig. 8, 2012: 32, 36, pl. IX-15; Pal 2006: 103–105, figs.1, 5, 6; Wong 2007: 262–263; Boucher 2008: 312–316, figs. 1-3; Jongeward 2019: 103, pl. 72.

mandorla. The reason why I identify these as the Amida/Amitābha/Amitāyus Buddha lies in two types of halos corresponding to those of the BODDO (Fig. 3). Although the shape of the mandorla of these two Buddhas is not elliptical but circular, it does not matter. In fact, it resulted from the sitting posture of the two Buddhas depicted shorter in height than the standing BODDO. Therefore, the circular mandorla has undoubtedly the same symbolic significance as the elliptical.

On the pedestal or plinth of the Florida sculpture is marked a Kharoṣṭhī inscription, which lists the names of Amridaha (Amridae) and Olo'ispare, which can be identified as Amṛtābha/Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara respectively.<sup>36</sup> Another image that is supposed to be depicted to the right of the seated Buddha has been lost, together with the inscription. That lost figure must be a Bodhisattva, most probably, Mahāsthāmaprāpta or Maitreya. Undoubtedly this relief panel originally consisted of three figures. The preaching Buddha depicted on this relief panel showing dharmacakramudrā and sitting on a lotus throne does not seem to be the Śākyamuni Buddha because he is not accompanied by Vajrapāṇi, the faithful guardian of this Buddha. A kneeling monk greeting the seated Amitābha Buddha might be Dhamitra, the donor of this relief panel whose name is also inscribed just below the seated Avalokiteśvara, or Budhamitra, probably his brother. Dhamitra and Budhamitra appear to be an adherent of the Amṛtābha/Amitābha Buddha, not of the Amitāyus Buddha, according to Fujita's classification of two groups of followers of the Amida Buddha (supra, p. 214). Both donors are supposed to wish rebirth in the Sukhāvatī of the Amida Buddha. The pensive figure seated in lalitāsana posture and holding a lotus to the viewer's right can be identified as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara despite the arguments by R. Salomon, G. Schopen and others.<sup>37</sup> Especially, Boucher argues that there was not a cultic image of Avalokiteśvara in Gandharan Buddhist art because the cult of this Bodhisattva cannot be attested in Buddhist textual sources before the fifth century CE.<sup>38</sup> However, even if textual evidences for the cult and popularity of this Bodhisattva are not available, an image of this Bodhisattva could be represented as an attendant of the Amida Buddha.<sup>39</sup> We have many Gandharan relief panels where two attendants are depicted beside the preaching Buddha making a triad. Boucher never paid due attention to the triads and consequently made a fatal mistake.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, I am not inclined to follow what Boucher concluded in his very intriguing and enlightening paper on Gandharan Avalokiteśvara images. The pensive posture with raising his right index toward the forehead signifies an attentive listening (作意思念, 繫念思惟) to the central Buddha's preaching.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Brough 1982/1996: 66/470, fig.1; Karashima 2014: 469, 478–479. The so-called Amida Triad is attested in the two Chinese translations quoted supra, p. 216. The relevant passage does not appear to be a later interpolation, to the best of my knowledge.

<sup>37</sup> Salomon/Schopen 2002: 27, fig. 1; Boucher 2008: 310–312.

<sup>38</sup> Boucher 2008: 319–321; 2014:307, 309. However, it is wrong to conclude that there is no image of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara depicted on Gandharan relief panels. See, infra, p. 220.

<sup>39</sup> Both the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* and its Chinese translations (T. 12. nos. 361 and 362) mention the two attendants of the Amida Buddha: Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, T. 12. No. 361: 290a, no. 362: 308b; Müller 1894: 52; Fujita 2011: 59; Karashima 2014: 470–472.

<sup>40</sup> Triads or triadic bodhisattvas are depicted on the so-called complex steles pertaining more than probably to the Amida Triad. Boucher did not attempt to investigate nor explain why such triadic attendants are depicted beside the preaching Buddha in Gandharan relief panels illustrated in the paper of Harrison/Lucanits 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Tanabe 2011: 76–77, 85. The hand gesture of raising right index toward forehead does not signify disappointment, worry, anxiety, fear and so forth that the cliché (*kare kapolaṃ dattvā cintāparo vyavasthitā*)

As for the Ancient Orient Museum relief panel (Fig. 14), no woman is depicted as is apparently indicated by the relevant Mahāyāna sūtras quoted above.<sup>42</sup> However, it is occupied by twelve male celestial beings or bodhisattva-mahāsattvas (菩薩大士). Among these twelve male figures, only eight are nimbate. In my interpretation, those without nimbus are also meant to be nimbate; their nimbuses are intentionally abbreviated owing to sculpturing awkwardness and inappropriateness.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, all these twelve male figures are equally not terrestrial but celestial beings (天人). They are depicted seated around the preaching Buddha following the principle of vertical perspective (上下遠近法) so that the topmost register does not mean the upper space as well as the lowest one does not the lower space. In other words, all of them should be regarded to be sitting horizontally around the preaching Buddha. What is more, on the relief panel is not depicted any particular or specified attendant (脇侍) despite Kimiaki Tanaka's identification of the two bodhisattvas of the lowest register as Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, inherent attendants of this Buddha.<sup>44</sup> All of them are attending to the preaching delivered by the central Buddha and equal in their ranks and functions in spite of trivial difference of headdress and attribute in addition to different types of lotus throne and pedestal. However, the pensive bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana posture and holding a lotus to the left of the Buddha reminds us of Avalokiteśvara as identified by Tanaka, but appears not yet to be a cultic image and seems still to be one of anonymous listeners of the Amida Buddha's preaching. The same holds true of another bodhisattva seated cross-legged to the right of the preaching Buddha. In my opinion, these three figures appear to make a prototype of the Amida triad and predate the so-called Triad of the Amida Buddha attended by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (or Maitreya) that G. Fussman, P. Harrison and Ch. Luczanits identified.<sup>45</sup>

What is more, all of them have the same beautiful face. According to two Chinese translations of the *Larger Sukhāvātyūhasūtra*, all celestial beings in the Amida's Pure Land are equally handsome with same facial feature like the devas of the Parānirmitavaśavartins (諸菩薩阿羅漢。面目皆端正。淨潔絕好。悉同一色).<sup>46</sup> The description of these Chinese sūtras do fit well with the visual representations of each face of twelve celestial beings depicted on this relief panel. It follows from this that the above-quoted Chinese description originated after such a facial feature of Gandharan celestial beings was depicted on this relief panel (Fig. 14) and others.

Considering the above-quoted Chinese description, Paul Harrison asserts that it is unconvincing that the celestial beings have the same male form. However, if we observe

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means as G. Schopen asserted, Schopen 2000: 79–98.

<sup>42</sup> Fujita 1970: 450; Harrison 1998: 554–555, 556–558, 564.

<sup>43</sup> Four bodhisattva figures in the middle register are sculpted on the bodies of other four of the topmost register, and therefore, it is almost impossible to add a nimbus to each of them. Kimiaki Tanaka regarded eight male figures in the upper and middle registers wrongly as the Eight Great Bodhisattvas (八大菩薩) of Mahāyāna Buddhism relying on the eight Great Bodhisattvas recorded in the *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra* (般舟三昧經) but identified the central preaching Buddha as the Amida Buddha, attended by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Tanaka 2016: 111–115, figs. 1-3, 11-13. However, according to this sūtra, they are listening to the preaching by the Śākyamuni Buddha, not the Amida Buddha. In this sūtra (T. 13. no. 418. 905a) is obviously mentioned the Amida Buddha preaching at the center of many bodhisattvas in the Sukhāvāti (其国名須摩提。在衆菩薩中央説經), possibly including Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

<sup>44</sup> Tanaka 2016: 107, 109–110.

<sup>45</sup> Fussman 1987: figs. 6, 7; 2012: 32–33; Harrison/Luczanits 2012: figs. 6, 7–12, 14–16.

<sup>46</sup> T12. no. 361. 283a, 284c, no. 362. 303c, 305a; Fujita 1970: 445–447.

carefully at each face of these twelve celestial beings, we are instantly convinced that his remarks are hardly tenable.<sup>47</sup> The literary expression of the same facial feature is not ‘figment of imagination’ of the compiler of the relevant text, but undoubtedly derived from sculpted faces of such an imagery as that of the Ancient Orient Museum piece.

In addition to these two relief panels, there are twenty so-called complex steles that feature a similar preaching Buddha sitting on lotus throne. Although they lack an elliptical mandorla, some of them or all of them have been identified as the Amida Buddha by several scholars.<sup>48</sup> However, the identification is not unanimously accepted, and there are a few who identify the relevant preaching Buddha as the Śākyamuni Buddha, an unspecified generic Buddha or the Śākyamuni Buddha conducting a theophany.

I am inclined to identify the relevant preaching Buddhas represented on the so-called complex steles as the Amida Buddha or at least non-historical and non-terrestrial Buddha. However, as it is too complicated for me to prove or disprove such identifications in this paper, I will leave their identification to other younger specialists of Gandharan art, for the time being.

### Concluding remarks

The above arguments lead to the conclusion that the concept and notion of Amitābha/Amitāyus arose from gilt Buddha Śākyamuni images of Gandhara. It goes without saying that the idea and the ideal emerged as a result of the strong desire of Gandharan Buddhists, at least Mahāsāṃghikas and Mahāyānists,<sup>49</sup> for having a new saviour Buddha of the Present who would substitute the Śākyamuni Buddha, who had already passed away from this world.<sup>50</sup> Among such Gandharan Buddhists, Kushan Buddhists might have fervently longed for a new saviour Buddha (救済仏, 現在仏) who was then believed to be alive and active in the universe, ready to help them. This assumption might be corroborated by Gandharan relief panels excavated in Kapishi<sup>51</sup> where Kushan donors are depicted together with the Maitreya Bodhisattva, the saviour Buddha to come (Fig. 16). The Rabatak inscription mentions that Kaniška I ordered to create the images of Mithra and Sraosha, who attend the Judgment at Cinvat Bridge.<sup>52</sup> As these Zoroastrian gods (yazatas) are typical Zoroastrian psychopomps (guardian and saviour) of the souls of the deceased, it appears that Kaniška I and the Kushans were apparently concerned about the afterlife (rebirth in paradise) and psychopomps or saviour Buddhas. Thus, the emergence of the Amida cult corresponds to the Kushan rule of Gandhara.

Anyhow, the Amida Buddha was not born from the original Gāndhārī text of the *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra*, but this sūtra was compiled in Gāndhārī after the concept of the Amida Buddha had evolved. Therefore, the original *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* in Gāndhārī dates back to

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<sup>47.</sup> Harrison 1998: 565, 571, note 44.

<sup>48.</sup> Huntington 1980: 666–667, 669; Rhi 1991: pls. 3–6, 36–48, 54–57; 2003: figs. 11–13, 2008: figs. 1–6; Maeda 2003: figs. 1–5; Harrison/Luczanits 2012: 115, 185; Zin 2018: 110, 113.

<sup>49.</sup> Karashima 2019: 980; 2012:32–33.

<sup>50.</sup> Fujita 2007: 272; Kagawa 1993: 102; Kajiyama 2012: 197–198. It is Satoshi Hiraoka that asserted most clearly that the origin of the Amida Buddha lies in the reinterpretation of the Śākyamuni Buddha by Mahāyānists, Hiraoka 2015: 156–157; 2018: 2–27.

<sup>51.</sup> Hackin 1925/26: 41, fig. 2; Meunié 1942: pls. X-35, XV-50, XXIII-72, XXIV-73; Rosenfield 1967: pls. 99, 104, 105; Ryukoku Museum 2011: 29, pl. 78.

<sup>52.</sup> Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96: 79; Sims-Williams 2004: 56; Gnoli 2009: 142–143, 150–151, 153.

the mid-second century CE, that is, the reigning period of Kaniṣka I (127/28–150/51), and not to the first century CE, as generally suggested by most Buddhologists.<sup>53</sup> In any case, the image of the Amida Buddha was not created by the earliest Mahāyāna texts but inversely the latter were born from the former.

As concerning the study of the origin of the Amida Buddha; first, Fujita insisted that both epithets, Amitābha and Amitāyus, must be investigated together unlike the investigation done by our predecessors.<sup>54</sup> Second, Yutaka Iwamoto raised a question: why only the Amida Buddha is endowed with two epithets?<sup>55</sup> Our predecessors did not pay any attention to these two aspects. Consequently, all of them failed in elucidating the origin of the Amida Buddha. However, this study makes the first attempt to consider the above two aspects, as suggested by Fujita and Iwamoto, and I am convinced that I could succeed in solving the above two problems.

I hope that the origin of the Amida Buddha that I proposed above will be an essential reading for anyone with an interest in the Amida Buddha and the Pure Land Buddhism.

Lastly, I should like to call your attention, once again, to an undeniable fact that demonstrating the origin of the Amida Buddha based on literary evidence is just a fantasy and an illusion. Undoubtedly, nobody could not, cannot, will not be able to find even a fragment of literary evidence for the origin of the Amida Buddha.

Postscript. After I had sent the draft to the editor, I found a triad depicting a preaching Buddha embellished with a smaller circular nimbus and bigger circular mandorla just as those of the Figures 14, 15, cf. Vogel 1906: 253–254, pl. LXVIII-b.

### Abbreviation

T : *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (大正新脩大藏經) edited by J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, Tokyo, 1924–1934.

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<sup>53</sup> Harrison 1998: 557, but his remark ‘or earlier’ should be removed. Most Buddhologists appear to assume that this sūtra had been already compiled before the anthropomorphic Śākyamuni Buddha image was created in Kushan period. Their dating is likely to have depended upon Kaniṣka Era 78 CE and the creation of the Buddha image was regarded to date from the first half of the first century CE. However, this Era started from 127/28 CE. In my opinion, the creation of the Śākyamuni Buddha image in Gandhara can be dated from around 100 CE. Therefore, their calculation and estimation are beside the mark. Cf. Sueki 1989: 328.

<sup>54</sup> Fujita 1985: 422.

<sup>55</sup> Iwamoto 1978: 39–40.

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- Fig. 12. Courtesy of Mr. Tatsuzo Kaku, Tokyo
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- Fig. 14. Courtesy of the Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo
- Fig. 15. Salomon/Schopen 2002: fig. 1
- Fig. 16. Courtesy of the Tokyo National Museum

Fig. 1. Preaching Amida Buddha, Mural, ca. 700 CE, Houryuji Temple, Nara



Fig. 2. Mithra (Miho) with a radiate nimbus, rev. of the Kaniska I gold coin, D: ca.2.8cm, The British Museum



Fig. 4. Standing Śākyamuni Buddha, rev. of Kaniska I bronze coin, D: 2.2 cm, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum



Fig. 3. Standing Buddha with a nimbus and an elliptical mandorla, rev. of Kaniska I gold coin, D: 2.7cm, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum



Fig. 5. Seated Maitreya Buddha, rev. of Kaniska I bronze coin, D: 2.5cm, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum





**PLATE 18**

Fig. 6. Seated Huviška with a radiate nimbus and mandorla, drawing by E. E. Herzfeld



Fig. 8. Ooromazdo (Ahura Mazda), rev. of Huviška gold coin, drawing by J. M. Rosenfield



Fig. 7. Athsho, rev. of Kanishka I gold coin, D: ca. 2.5cm, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum



Fig. 9. Nimbate Standing Buddha, H: 97cm, The Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum



Fig. 10. Miracle of Śrāvastī, Pāitāva, H: 81cm,  
Musée Guimet, Paris



Fig. 11. Gilt Standing Śākyamuni Buddha, Kapishi,  
The National Museum of Afghanistan



Fig. 12. Gilt Standing Buddha, Kapishi, private collection

Fig. 13. Gilt Standing Buddha, from Jaulian, H: 62cm,  
The Taxila Museum



مہاتما بুদ্ধہ کا طبع کاری والا مجسمہ  
Gilded Image of Buddha  
Province Unknown  
2nd-3rd Cent A. D.



**PLATE 20**

Fig. 14. Preaching Buddha with a nimbus and a mandorla on the lotus throne, H: 64 5cm, The Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo



Fig. 15. Preaching Buddha with a nimbus and a mandorla on the lotus throne, H: 30cm, State Museum of Florida, U.S.A.



Fig. 16. The Bodhisattva Maitreya in Tuṣita Heaven, Kapishi, H: 51cm, The Tokyo National Museum, Acc. No. TC728

